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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the topic of sex stereotypes in children's literature, this annotated bibliography contains references of 28 articles and papers in the ERIC database. The citations include articles discussing sex stereotypes in children's reading materials, basals, picture books, content area materials, and award-winning children's books. Other sections include articles on teacher influence in reading material selection, and the effects of sex stereotypes on children. (MM)

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Sex Stereotypes in Children's Literature

by Mary Morgan

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Sex stereotypes are perpetuated in a variety of ways. Research indicates that sex stereotyping in children's literature has a major influence on the development of children's attitudes concerning sex roles, self-concept, and sexual identity. And although many publishers now employ guidelines for the elimination of sex-role stereotypes, especially in textbooks and other reading materials, studies show that stereotypes still flourish in children's literature.

This ERIC *FAST Bib* explores several aspects of sex stereotyping in children's literature. Following an overview of the issue, three sections cover research on sex stereotypes in different types of children's literature. The first of these sections examines elementary school reading materials, focusing on stereotyping in basals and picture books. The next section deals with sex stereotypes in content area reading materials – science books, counting books, and music education materials. Yet another category provides information concerning sex stereotyping in award-winning children's literature, including the Caldecott and Newbery Medal winners. Articles from this section not only examine the sex stereotypes in specific children's books, but also analyze how sex stereotyping has changed over the years. Teacher influence is the focus of the fourth section, and articles here indicate that teachers tend to choose materials which perpetuate stereotypical male/female roles. Finally, the effects on children of sex stereotyping in reading materials are discussed, focusing on the aspects of recall, reading comprehension, and behavior.

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Overview

Britton, Gwyneth; and others. "The Battle to Imprint Citizens for the 21st Century," *Reading Teacher*, v37 n8 p724-33 Apr 1984.

Argues that publishers need to do more to eradicate racism and sexism from basal reading texts. Suggests that including the handicapped, the elderly, and one-parent families in the texts would also reflect society more realistically.

Collins, Laura J.; and others. "Sex-Role Stereotyping in Children's Literature: A Change from the Past," *Childhood Education*, v60 n4 p278-85 Mar-Apr 1984.

Reports a study of sex-role distribution in children's literature, hypothesizing that today's writing for preschool children reflects the change in women's work roles by presenting more females in central roles, illustrations, and titles.

Huston, Aletha C. "Sex Typing and Socialization." Paper presented at the 90th Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, 1982. 14 p. [ED 222 285]

Reviews literature on children's acquisition of sex-typed knowledge, preference, and behavior and offers a matrix of sex-typing constructs and sex-typed content areas. Discusses the importance of activities, interests, and peer associations in the early acquisition of sex-typing constructs, as well as the importance of cognitions and concepts about sex typing in the process of learning about gender.

Rasmussen, Bonnie. "Dealing with Sexism and Ethnocentrism in Literature," *English in Australia*, n60 p54-57 Jun 1982.

Just as schools can teach consumerism and active criticism of unfair advertising techniques, so too can schools teach a watchdog attitude toward prejudice through the use of multicultural reading materials in libraries and classrooms.

Sex Stereotypes in Children's Reading Materials, Basals, and Picture Books

Bordelon, Kathleen W. "Sexism in Reading Materials," *Reading Teacher*, v38 n8 p792-97 Apr 1985.

Reviews research dealing with two major questions: 1) Is sexism present in reading materials? and (2) Are boys poorer readers than girls, and should teaching materials be geared to boys' interests?

Britton, Gwyneth; Lumpkin, Margaret. "Basal Readers: Paltry Progress Pervades," *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, v14 n6 p4-7 1983. [ED 251 561; print copy not available from EDRS]

Analysis of sex and race representation in almost 3,000 stories from 77 basal readers in 7 series published between 1980 and 1982 shows that, although minority and female numerical representation has increased, there has been little progress in role models offered.

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Davis, Albert J. "Sex-Differentiated Behaviors in Nonsexist Picture Books," *Sex Roles*, v11 n1-2 p1-16 Jul 1984.

Compares behavior of male and female characters in 50 nonsexist picture books with those in 46 conventional picture books and finds several differences but little sex typing in the conventional books. Female characters in nonsexist books were more nurturing and less aggressive than males in both types of book.

Hitchcock, Mary E.; Tompkins, Gail E. "Basal Readers: Are They Still Sexist?" *Reading Teacher*, v41 n3 p288-92 Dec 1987.

Examines six recent basal series and compares them to books used in older studies to find evidence of improvement in the portrayal of female characters.

Levstik, Linda S. "'I Am No Lady!': The Tomboy in Children's Fiction," *Children's Literature in Education*, v14 n1 p14-20 Spr 1983.

Despite the often repeated contention that children's fiction has consistently presented a narrow and stereotypical view of the lives of girls and women, a review of books written in the 1920s and 1930s indicates a degree of female dissatisfaction with the status quo.

White, Hedy. "Damsels in Distress: Dependency Themes in Fiction for Children and Adolescents," *Adolescence*, v21 n82 p251-56 Sum 1986.

Examines dependency themes in 113 recently published fictional books for children and adolescents and compares females and males in situations where one character helps or influences another. Finds that female characters were more likely to receive than to give help, whereas male characters were more likely to give than to receive help.

Williams, Allen J., Jr.; and others. "Sex Role Socialization in Picture Books: An Update," *Social Science Quarterly*, v68 n1 p148-56 Mar 1987.

Updates early research on how females are depicted in children's picture books. Notes that while the ratio of females to males is now closer to parity, storybook characters still continue to present traditional views of females.

Content Area Materials

Nilsen, Alleen Pace. "Three Decades of Sexism in School Science Materials," *School Library Journal*, v34 n1 p117-22 Sep 1987.

Describes a study analyzing sexism in recent children's science books in comparison to books published in the 1960s and 1970s. Factors considered included: male-oriented illustrations, overuse of masculine pronouns, references to animals, exclusive language, careers for males, and the male figure as imagery.

Pucciani, Donna. "Sexism in Music Education: Survey of the Literature, 1972-1982," *Music Educators Journal*, v70 n1 p49-51, 68-71, 73 Sep 1983.

Discusses literature dealing with sexism, sex bias, or sex-role stereotypes in music education, focusing on educational material; curriculum (e.g., music course offerings and enrollment patterns); guidance counseling; and teacher behavior and teacher training.

Westbrook, Lynn. "A Study of Sexism in the Illustrations of Counting Books." 1980. 9 p. [ED 252 286]

Examines how sexist examples in arithmetic and counting books suggest that math is a "masculine" subject and foster traditional, male-dominated sex roles. Describes three categories of counting books: 1) traditionally sexist, male-oriented books; 2) books that avoid the topic of sex roles; and 3) books that deal positively with the issue of sex roles. Concludes that when selecting counting books, adults need to pay attention to the content of the illustrations.

Sex Stereotypes in Award-Winning Children's Books

Dougherty, Wilma Holden; Engel, Rosalind E. "An 80s Look for Sex Equality in Caldecott Winners and Honor Books," *Reading Teacher*, v40 n4 p394-98 Jan 1987.

Analyzes Caldecott winners and Honor Books of the 1980s and compares the findings to those of earlier studies to discover if the depiction of sex roles and characteristics has changed. Concludes that the newer books reflect a shift toward sex equality and provide some changing sex characteristics and roles—but not enough.

Heintz, Katharine E. "An Examination of the Sex-Role and Occupational-Role Presentations of Female Characters in Award-Winning Children's Picture Books." Paper presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, 1987. 31 p. [ED 286 225]

Examines the number of times male and female characters appear in text and illustrations, and evaluates the occupations and activities of the characters found in 14 Caldecott Medal winning children's books from 1971 to 1984. Finds that male and female characters continue to be shown in unequal numbers and stereotypical roles.

Kinman, Judith R.; Henderson, Darwin L. "An Analysis of Sexism in Newbery Medal Award Books from 1977 to 1984," *Reading Teacher*, v38 n9 p885-89 May 1985.

Shows how Caldecott and Newbery Medal books have reflected the changing norms of society during the past two decades, specifically in the increased number of books with women as main characters, positive images of females, and situations similar to those encountered in everyday life.

Kinman, Judith R.; Henderson, Darwin L. *A Guide to Newbery Medal Winners and Honor Books, 1977-1984*. 1984. 38 p. [ED 249 536]

Analyzes 27 Newbery Award Medal and Honor winning books (1977 through 1984) for sexism. Provides guidelines used to determine sexism in the books.

Ray, Becky. "Little Boys and Picture Books," *Catholic Library World*, v54 n2 p74-78 Sep 1982.

Discusses sex-role stereotyping in children's literature and examines existence of male stereotyping among the Caldecott Medal and Honor Books from 1970 to 1980. Discusses elements of the male stereotype including emotions, achievement, and responsibilities.

Schubert, Nancy A. "Sex-Role Stereotyping in Caldecott Award Books." 1980. 12 p. [ED 220 870]

Examines sex-role stereotyping in 44 Caldecott Award winning books published between 1937 and 1980. Reveals 7 major categories of sex stereotyping: 1) achievements of females are attributed to their good looks; 2) norms are established that limit female aspirations and self-concept; 3) males perform all brave and important deeds; 4) females most frequently show strong emotion; 5) females are stereotyped in domestic roles; 6) males sit idly by while females perform domestic occupations; and 7) only males are depicted in a variety of occupations.

Teacher Influence

Gilbert, Pam. "Stereotypes for the Classroom: Student Teachers Write Sexist Children's Stories," *Australian Journal of Reading*, v8 n2 p14-20 Mar 1985.

Shows that, despite discussions of sexist stereotyping in children's literature, student teachers wrote stories containing those stereotypes. Concludes that student teachers need to be made aware of the influence of male-dominated language and of male versions of experience on themselves, their students, and the literature available for classroom use.

Luke, Allan; and others. "The Selective Tradition in Action: Gender Bias in Student Teachers' Selections of Children's Literature," *English Education*, v18 n4 p209-18 Dec 1986.

Reports on a study intended to discover the criteria for selecting children's literature and textbooks. Concludes that the teachers' choices were sexist because selected plot conflicts were resolved through male agency.

Osmont, Pip. "Teacher Inquiry in the Classroom: Reading and Gender Set," *Language Arts*, v64 n7 p758-61 Nov 1987.

Describes observations of two British primary school classrooms and how teaching conditions foster or preclude gender-specific reading attitudes.

Smith, Nancy J.; and others. "Making the Literate Environment Equitable," *Reading Teacher*, v40 n4 p400-07 Jan 1987.

Surveys teachers in Texas and Kansas to determine their favorite books for reading aloud to children. Shows that their preferences included twice as many male protagonists as female and that these males were portrayed more positively than the females.

Effects of Sex Stereotypes on Children

Ashton, Eleanor. "Measures of Play Behavior: The Influence of Sex-Role Stereotyped Children's Books," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, v9 n1 p43-47 Jan 1983.

Following exposure to picture books that showed characters playing with either sex-role-stereotypic or nonstereotypic toys, preschoolers chose to play longer with the toys they had seen in the books. The books had a greater effect on girls than on boys.

Gardiner, Sandra Faye Altman. *Children's Sex Role Preferences and Their Like-Dislike Ratings and Comprehension of Sex-Stereotyped Reading Content.* University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1983. 205 pp. [ED 236 569]

Examines the effects of sex-typed content and sex-role preference on the reading material preferences of fifth grade boys and girls. Explores how high- and low-rated sex-typed reading content and students' gender and sex-role preferences influenced reading comprehension.

Kropp, Jerri Jaudon; Halverson, Charles F. "Preschool Children's Preferences and Recall for Stereotyped versus Nonstereotyped Stories," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, v9 n2 p261-72 Feb 1983.

Of four stories, preschool girls liked one with a female character and feminine activity best, and one with a male character and masculine activity least. The reverse was true for boys. Measures taken a day later showed that children recalled more about stories they had liked least the day before.

Scott, Kathryn P. "Effects of Gender-Fair Instructional Materials on Fourth, Seventh, and Eleventh Graders' Attitudes and Understanding." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, 1983. 20 pp. [ED 232 947]

A study of 172 students in 4th, 7th, and 11th grades sought to determine 1) the impact of male main characters and story interest; 2) the impact of traditional and nontraditional stories on reading comprehension; and 3) the effect of age on sex-role attitudes, story interest, and reading comprehension.

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